

Message Text

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TAGS:OEXC, UR (AITMATOV, CHINGIS)

SUBJECT:VISIT OF SOVIET WRITER AITMATOV

REF: MOSCOW 8906

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET WRITER CHINGIZ AITMATOV OF KIRGIZ REPUBLIC AND HIS SON SANZHARBEK DEPARTED WASHINGTON FOR CANADA JULY 22 AFTER VERY SUCCESSFUL 25 DAY VISIT TO US. HE EXPECTS RETURN MOSCOW ABOUT JULY 30. TRIP HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED ARENA STAGE PRODUCTION OF HIS PLAY "ASCENT OF MOUNT FUJI" AND MEETINGS WITH PLAYWRIGHTS JEROME LAWRENCE AND ROBERT LEE, AMERICAN INDIAN WRITER SCOTT MOMEDAY, AND AUTHOR KURT VONNEGUT. DURING WRAPUP MEETING WITH ASST. SECRETARY RICHARDSON HE RECOMMENDED FUTURE US-SOVIET CULTURAL EXCHANGES INCLUDE MORE SOVIETS FROM CENTRAL ASIA.

2. OUTLINE OF ITINERARY AND PROGRAM AS FOLLOWS:

A. WASHINGTON, DC (JUNE 27-JULY 5) - ATTENDANCE AT ARENA

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STAGE PRODUCTION OF "FUJI" WHERE AITMATOV WAS VISIBLY MOVED BY REALISTIC PRODUCTION HE CONSIDERED SUPERIOR TO THE STYLIZED PRODUCTION OF MOSCOW'S SOVREMENNIK (SANZHARBEK EXPRESSED FAVORABLE SURPRISE AT AUDIENCE'S POSITIVE RESPONSE

AND ITS UNDERSTANDING OF PLAY); SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH ZELDA FICHANDLER AND EVENING BACKSTAGE WITH ARENA CAST; VERY PLEASANT DAY SPENT ON BOAT OF INDEPENDENT CRAB FISHERMAN ON CHESAPEAKE BAY, FOLLOWED BY DINNER AT LOCAL RESTAURANT; BREAKFAST WITH AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN, MUSEUMS, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD JULY 4 CELEBRATION;

B. CHICAGO (JULY 5-7) - GOSPEL MUSIC AT BLACK CHURCH SERVICE, DISCUSSION OF SOVIET LITERATURE WITH PROF. WEIL OF NORTHWESTERN, VISIT TO ART INSTITUTE, SIGHTSEEING;

C. LOS ANGELES (JULY 7-11) - LUNCHEON MEETING WITH PLAY-WRIGHTS JEROME LAWRENCE AND ROBERT LEE, FOLLOWED BY DINNER AT LAWRENCE'S HOME (HIGH POINT OF L.A. VISIT); MEETING WITH DAVID RINTELS, PRESIDENT SCREEN WRITERS GUILD (WHO INTENDS CONTACT UNION OF CINEMATOGRAPHERS TO ESTABLISH BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, DETAILS UNKNOWN); VISIT TO UNIVERSAL STUDIOS AND AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE;

D. YOSEMITE PARK (JULY 11) - VISIT EN ROUTE L.A. - SAN FRANCISCO BY CAR; EVENING AT HOME OF PARK SUPERINTENDENT AND WIFE ("REAL AMERICANS" WHO SERENADED GUESTS WITH FOLK SONGS WITH ACCORDIAN AND GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENT); DISCUSSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN US AND USSR;

E. SAN FRANCISCO (JULY 13-16) - SIGHTSEEING, INCLUDING CHINATOWN (AITMATOV'S FREQUENT ANTI-PRC COMMENTS WERE AT ODDS WITH HIS PLEASURE AT SEEING SO MANY ASIAN FACES IN CALIFORNIA, HIS FAVORITE REGION IN US); MEETING WITH SCOTT MOMEDAY, FORMER FULBRIGHT AMERICAN INDIAN LECTURER AT MOSCOW U; STANFORD UNIV., INCLUDING HOOVER INSTITUTE AND CONTACT WITH STUDENTS;

F. NEW YORK (JULY 16-20) - PEN CLUB LUNCH GIVEN BY FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, AITMATOV'S US PUBLISHER, ATTENDED BY ARTHUR MILLER AND KURT VONNEGUT, AMONG OTHERS; PRESS CONFERENCE COVERED BY NY TIMES, MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, SATURDAY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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REVIEW, AND VARIETY; POST-LUNCHEON MEETING WITH VONNEGUT, INCLUDING WATCHING APOLLO-SOYUZ DOCKING ON TV AND JOINT INTERVIEW WITH CORRESPONDENT FROM "LITERATURNAYA GAZETA"; (AITMATOV'S COMMENTS TO "LITGAZ" ON VALUE OF SPACE PROJECT CONTRAST WITH HIS LACK OF INTEREST DURING PRE-NY PORTION OF TRIP, WHEN HIS NEWS INTEREST WAS LIMITED TO PORTUGAL, INDIA, AND SOLZHENITSYN. ON ARRIVAL NY, HOWEVER, A CALL FROM "LITGAZ" SENT AITMATOV AND SON SCURRYING FOR NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS FOR USE IN LAST MINUTE "CRASH COURSE" ON IMPORTANCE OF APOLLO-SOYUZ PROJECT FOR US-USSR RELATIONS); SIGHTSEEING, MUSEUM VISITS, MEETING WITH EDITOR QUEENS SLAVIC REVIEW, AND LUNCH WITH IREX (SON EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST

IN IREX EXCHANGE); PLANS TO VISIT BERKSHIRE FESTIVAL IN
PITTSFIELD, MASS., CANCELLED BY AITMATOV AT LAST MINUTE;

G. WASHINGTON, DC (JULY 22) - IN WRAPUP CALL ON ASST.
SECRETARY RICHARDSON, AITMATOV RECOMMENDED FUTURE EXCHANGES
INCLUDE SOVIETS FROM CENTRAL ASIA AND URGED THAT VISITING
SOVIET WRITERS BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS UNIVERSITY
STUDENT AUDIENCES (WHICH WAS DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE IN JULY);
HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT US THEATER GROUPS TOURING USSR PER-
FORM ONE SOVIET PLAY TO ADD NEW DIMENSION TO SOVIETS' UNDER-
STANDING OF OWN DRAMA AND SERVE AS BASIS FOR COMPARISON (
SUGGESTION APPARENTLY STEMS FROM AITMATOV'S ATTENDANCE AT
ARENA STAGE'S ;FUJI".)

3. AITMATOV APPEARS TO HAVE ENJOYED TRIP ALTHOUGH -
ACCORDING TO ESCORT INTERPRETER - HE WOULD NOT HAVE COME TO
US IF SON HAD NOT BEEN SO INTERESTED IN VISIT. AITMATOV AND
SON WERE ALWAYS ENGAGING AND IN GOOD SPIRITS. HE WAS MORE
OPEN THAN MOST SOVIET VISITORS FROM EUROPEAN PARTS OF USSR.
HIS EASYGOING ATTITUDE ALSO EVIDENT IN DISCONCERTING HABIT
OF REQUESTING LAST MINUTE SCHEDULE CHANGES AND ATTEMPTING
TO CANCEL PORTIONS OF PROGRAM. SON SANZHARBEK SEEMED GREAT
-LY ATTRACTED BY VIBRANCY OF AMERICA. HE ENJOYED ENDLESS
HOURS OF BLUE GRASS MUSIC AND SAW "NASHVILLE" TWICE.
SHOPPING GREATLY INTERESTED AITMATOV, AND HE INSISTED THAT
IT BE MADE PART OF EVERY MAJOR STOPOVER. SOVIET EMBASSY
SHOWED HIGH INTEREST IN AITMATOV AND MAINTAINED MORE THAN
USUAL DEGREE OF CONTACT, AS DID UN MISSION. AITMATOV GAVE
VOA INTERVIEW ON FINAL DAY OF VISIT AND EARLIER IN STAY HE
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VOLUNTARILY CALLED ON EDITORIAL OFFICES OF USIA'S
"AMERICA ILLUSTRATED" WHICH WILL BE DOING STORY FOR FUTURE
ISSUE.

4. WE CONSIDER VISIT DISTINCT SUCCESS IN TERMS OF GIVING
PROMINENT SOVIET WRITER FIRST-HAND CONTACT WITH MANY
ASPECTS OF US LIFE AND SOCIETY, AS WELL AS OPPORTUNITY TO
SEE HIS PLAY PRODUCED, MEET HIS PUBLISHER, AND RECEIVE
COPY OF "FUJI" IN ENGLISH/RUSSIAN EDITION WHICH HAD JUST
COME FROM PRINTERS. THIS AMPLY ILLUSTRATES "RIPPLE EFFECT"
OF THESE EXCHANGES WHICH BEGAN WITH DEPT-SPONSORED CU-VISIT
BY ARENA STAGE TO USSR IN 1973. WE ARE ALSO PLEASED THAT
SOVIETS PERMITTED PROMINENT NON-RUSSIAN WRITER TO VISIT US
WITHOUT ESCORT FROM UNION OF WRITERS. WE HOPE THIS WILL BE
REPEATED IN FUTURE SOVIET VISITS UNDER CU'S INTERNATIONAL
VISITOR PROGRAM. KISSINGER

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